

EDITORIAL

In last month's editorial I expressed puzzlement at the apparent logical inconsistency of apparently taking seriously stories of aliens gliding through walls as well as aliens securely locked up at US Air Force bases. Even a fantasy world must have some kind of internal logic, if the reader is to attain the desired suspension of disbelief while reading about it. My difficulty is not with the serious study of alleged alien abductions and UFO crashes, but with the fact that so many well-educated and highly intelligent folk treat these stories as if they represented a physical reality - the activities of extraterrestrial beings - rather than just a social reality.

I also have difficulty, along with a number of other British and French ufologists, of trying to understand how so many researchers favour the ETH as the explanation for puzzling UFO reports, which inevitably leads to distortion of the evidence and testimony, rather than engaging on unbiased investigations on a case-by-case basis. This approach has certainly paid dividends for some British and French investigators.

PREDICTIONS AND CRASHES

Nigel Watson

If anyone predicts anything about UFOs it is almost certain to be proven wrong. Most predictions about imminent mass landings and revelations are made by cultists or contactees, but more often sober groups expect 'something to happen' very soon. A case in point was given by an unnamed spokesman for the British UFO Society (BUFOS):

'During 1979 there will be a major breakthrough . . . ' which 'will make it necessary for us to take the most searching look inwards so we can reach up to higher wisdom. If UFOs are extraterrestrial we have to be mentally alert to finding ways and means of having open traffic.'

As far as I know, there was no reaching in, looking up or open traffic with UFOs in 1979; then again my Ford Capri could well have taken me on a one-way road to spiritual ignorance and oblivion.

From the same newspaper source (1) we are told:

'A recent visitor to San Francisco told the Evening Express that daily papers were carrying stories about an incident which the MoD and RAF had investigated. This, according to reports, involved a crash by some vehicle, in the wreckage of which there were two badly burned corpses, each about 4 feet tall.'

BUFOS were asked about this case but they could only refer to 'an incident in Norway in the 1960s' which they thought was an early space mission with apes, that had gone wrong.

Does anyone know anything else about the corpses found by the RAF twenty years ago? It did strike me that it could have been a confabulation of the Berwyn Mountain crash case of January 1974, but I don't think there was that much interest in the case, in terms of a crashed spaceship, until the 1990s.

Could this be another smoking gun, or just another garbled rumour?

Reference

1. Power, Tim. 'Watch out for a UFO breakthrough', *Evening Express* (Aberdeen), 9 March 1979

LITERARY CRITICISM

Jonathan Downes and Nigel Wright. *The Rising of the Moon: The Devonshire UFO Triangle*, Domra Publications, 1999. No price given

This is an unusual UFO book by any standards. It begins with Jonathan Downes drowning his sorrows in whisky and pills, and ends with him going into psychotherapy. In between there is a heady brew of Fort, Keel, Holiday, Crowley and Lovecraft mixed with the authors' own research into unexplained events in Devonshire.

They show that the outside world can be as wild and insane as our own minds; UFOs, mystery animals, MIB, poltergeists, monsters, merfolk and pixies have pranced and paraded all over Devonshire for many a long year.

Wright and Downes's investigations and research are candid and amusing. In 1997 they attended the BBC Radio Devon stand at the Devon County Show and, amongst Spice Girls impersonators and prize bulls, they talked about UFOs and a friend marched around as a grey alien. Another friend, Richard Freeman, claims that his worship of a spider-god caused a plague of these creatures in Yorkshire. And there is plenty more weird stuff to please a saucer full of hippies.

Given the sensational nature of such topics, and the circumstances of their research, lots of useful, intriguing and detailed local reports are compared and contrasted with theories and cases beyond Devonshire. There are a few odd holes in their research, though. For example, they refer to the British 1909 airship scare as being 'not satisfactorily dealt with elsewhere'. There are quite a few useful articles on this subject, but this only highlights the fact that ufological work has to be continually rediscovered, due to a lack of bibliographic and archive resources. Despite this, the authors put the phantom airship cases they do find into their proper social context and highlight the fact that such phenomena are not seen in isolation.

It is also a surprise to find them demolishing several of the cases they present earlier in the book, and they certainly have no love for the circus surrounding Roswell or the ETH. They do not dismiss the ETH entirely, but they postulate that UFOs and other Fortean phenomena are caused by energy forms that feed off human emotions. They call this Odylic Lifeorce Energy which comes from the Wilhelm Reich school of mystical ufology. Whether such energy vampires exist is an entertaining idea but the authors rightly and artfully cop out by saying their book is 'based on personal experience rather than a scientific treatise'. A good read anyway.

Nigel Watson

Sarah Moran. *Alien Art: Extraterrestrial Expressions on Earth*, Bramley Books, 1998. £12.99

Like one of his beloved sky gods, Erich von Daniken and his ancient astronaut theories have reappeared on our planet. As proof, this is a picture book of his greatest hits. We get glossy pictures of the Nazca Lines, Japanese figurines, Mayan pyramids, Costa Rica balls and all the usual suspects.

What puzzles me is if half of these sculptures, carvings, monuments and structures are true remains of alien, or alien-inspired, work, why didn't they leave something a bit more convincing than a bunch of rocks pointing at a star, or carvings of people in funny hats? Sure enough, the construction of many of these artifacts is often remarkable and impressive but not beyond the efforts of humanity. Even a dedicated believer doesn't have to look far to find alternative and more mundane explanations for these objects.

At first appearances this book is a pleasant and uncritical look at ancient astronautics. What is more worrying is Moran's scepticism of Darwinian evolution; the last words of her book are:

'Is it so much harder to contemplate that we may have been influenced by visitors from the skies, than that we somehow evolved from an elusive missing link with monkeys? An open mind is all we need.'

With open minds like that we could all fall into a bottomless pit of gullibility. At least monkeys exist in reality; the space gods or aliens are just a fancy concept.

I don't think science is omnipotent, and there are flaws in Darwinian theory, and it is refreshing that 'establishment science' is not slavishly venerated and respected. Charles Fort certainly made it his life's work poking holes and fun at pompous scientists and their precious dogmas. The only problem now is that anyone can kick a stone or read a book, and before you can say 'George Adamski' they become an expert who knows better than qualified scientists. Then again, some qualified scientists have weirder ideas than a room full of drunken rabbits. So the point of this argument is that this book

is just an excuse for pretty pictures and vacuous questions that pander to brainless dolts.

To summarise: A nice picture book for believers who pray on their knees to von Daniken and swallow his extraterrestrial ejaculations.

Nigel Watson

LETTERS

Martin Kottmeyer's 'Betty Hill's Medical Nightmare' (MMS, No. 12, February 1999) is an absurd bit of speculative overreaching totally unworthy of him.

Unlike many of my colleagues on the 'pro-UFO' side of the fence, I happen to think Marty has given us some important insights that ufologists would be foolish to ignore. These are best summed up as, 'Be very, very careful in teasing out and evaluating the testimony of UFO percipients or alleged percipients. If their experiences were real, never forget that what witnesses think they see during startling and strange experiences is "framed" by their life experiences, and among the most important influences are popular culture and high-profile current events. Maybe what they saw wasn't quite like they remember it. Further, if the witnesses weren't witnesses at all, but hoaxers or dupes instead, then clues to what inspired the hoax and/or its content are likely to be found in popular culture, etc.' Sound advice.

Taking one of Kottmeyer's most famous suggestions as an example, suppose Barney Hill did see an alien being with compelling eyes staring down at him on the night of 19 September 1961 (I happen to think he did). However, suppose he also saw that *Outer Limits* episode featuring 'the eyes that speak' just a few days before Dr Simon hypnotically probed his CE-III experience. Barney's recollections that day may well have been importantly influenced by what he'd seen on TV. Thus, if we can't prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Barney didn't see 'The Bellerro Shield', we're left with having to suspend judgement on the accuracy of Barney's description of the 'captain', though not necessarily the experience itself.

Regrettably, Kottmeyer almost invariably does himself and the value of his thinking a disservice by trying to make his approach do too much, as in 'Medical Nightmare'. Without any evidence - *none!* - he assumes Betty was consumed by fears of radioactive bomb-test fallout, inspired by the not so *Lucky Dragon* incident, etc., etc., even stating without qualification that she had an 'understandable [radiation] anxiety'. (Where did you come up with this intelligence, Marty? Pray, do tell us.) Without a shred of supporting evidence or testimony, he links this presumed anxiety with Betty's compass-needle test of the car and the mysterious spots (not actually suggested by a physicist, by the way), Betty's and the 'leader's' discussion of earthly foods, the nature of the physical exams and biological sample collection to which she and Barney were subjected, and so on. Even more tenuously, he suggests the false-teeth episode was born of bits of nearly 12-year-old wire-service stories of dead saucer pilots with perfect teeth tucked away in Betty's subconscious. (At least the *Outer Limits* episode was broadcast only days before Barney's recall of the compelling, wrap-around eyes!) And so on, and on, and on.

In a letter earlier this year, Kottmeyer told me his 'interest in ufology is mainly in the nature of a mental hobby akin to solving crossword puzzles'. While the products of such mental gymnastics can be useful when applied to real-world data whose relevancy is solidly established, they are worse than useless when wielded without such a connection.

Marty, with respect, if you can't plausibly marry up theories and facts, stick to crosswords.

Karl T. Pflock, Placitas, New Mexico

Dear Karl: Your challenge to me to come up with evidence that Betty was consumed by fears of radioactive bomb-test fallout associated with Project Bravo is misguided. I did not say she feared fallout from any test. I said she feared she had been exposed to radiation during the UFO encounter. The quote, 'She almost panicked . . . ' and the claim that she was haunted by the thought she had been exposed to radioactivity appear on pp. 39 and 40 of *The Interrupted Journey* and I consider that synonymous with anxiety.

I have never denied Barney had an experience. You have termed the claim of influence by 'The Bellerro Shield' a 'mere nit' elsewhere. Donald Keyhoe singled out the sinister look of the eyes as something that needed to be fully explained and doubtless would praise you for correcting his misimpression of its import. Still, it is not the effects on the assessment of the Hill case that made the finding interesting to me, it was the fact that many post-Hill cases also claimed that aliens had

wraparound eyes. Your faith that Barney saw eyes that were 'compelling' is puzzling. When I laid out the paper trail for Bullard, he agreed that this particular description does not appear ('The Eyes Still Speak', *REALL News*, June/July 1998, available on the REALL website).

That the connection of the false teeth episode in the Hill case to the Koehler yarn is tenuous is true, but quite beside the point. The whole exercise was an attempt to show an alternative explanation is possible, not that it was certain. Mack was implying that alternative interpretations of alien medical procedures were not even conceivable. I showed it was not as difficult as he thought. Let me interject that if we accept certain claims that abductions have been happening since before the turn of the century and in massive numbers, the surprise shown over the dentures is a bit odd. Sixty-plus years and they haven't seen dentures before?

In saying stick to crosswords, you presume I do crosswords in the present tense. I have not done any in probably 15 or 20 years. I used to like them, but interests change.

Martin S. Kottmeyer, Carlyle, Illinois

First, with respect to your declaration that, to your knowledge, there are no cases with multiple independent witnesses 'which cannot be explained with reference to sightings of aircraft or natural phenomena', I find it hard to believe you are not aware of many such cases. So I suspect this was a ploy to draw out ETHers, case lists in hand.

Of course, such sightings are numerous, many of them very significant in terms of the ETH or, at least, encounters with non-human technology. I'll cite just three of my favourites: (1) 12 August 1953, Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, multiple ground and airborne visual and radar, with apparent UFO reaction to witness actions (see Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, pp. 232-235 in Doubleday hardcover, pp. 304-308 in Ace paperback); (2) 30 June 1950, near Kingman, Kansas, multiple ground visual CE-I/II, with apparent UFO reaction to witness actions (see Gross, *UFOs: A History - April-July 1950*, pp. 66-70); (3) 17 July 1957, over Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma, multiple airborne and ground radar visual, with radar-emitting UFO and apparent UFO reactions to witness activity (see Brad Sparks, 'RB-47 Radar Visual Case', in Clark, *The UFO Encyclopedia*, 2nd Edition, pp. 761-790).

Second, 'Betty Hill's Medical Nightmare' redux, reply to Martin Kottmeyer's rejoinder:

I didn't suggest Kottmeyer claimed Betty 'feared fallout from any test' but rather that his suggestion that Betty was primed to fear exposure to radiation by the fallout paranoia of the time - the inescapable meaning of what you wrote, Marty - is offered without a single fact to back it up.

As for the compelling eyes, I misspoke, or 'mistyped'. What I should have written was that, from the beginning of the investigation in 1961, it was clear Barney Hill was deeply affected emotionally by what seemed to him the intense focus of the UFO 'captain'. Quoting from Walter Webb's 26 October 1961 report on the case, recounting his interview with the Hills on 19 October: 'The "leader" at the window held a special attraction for the witness and frightened him terribly. The witness said he could almost feel this figure's intense concentration to do something, to carry out a plan. Mr Hill believed he was going to be captured "like a bug in a net."'

Whether the leader had compelling eyes or not, it's clear from the outset, well before the 'Bellerio Shield' and hypnosis, Barney Hill found the figure he saw frighteningly compelling. As I noted in my previous letter to MMS, we are indebted to Marty Kottmeyer for pointing out the 'Bellerio Shield' problem and thus the need to suspend judgement or at least be very cautious about the eyes that spoke, but only the eyes. I don't recall referring to the possible influence of this *Outer Limits* episode as a 'mere nit', but if I did (sounds like me), I was wrong.

Kottmeyer's point about claims of alien abduction subsequent to the Hill case reflecting key features of that case as it has been recounted is well taken and now well recognised in ufology, in no small degree thanks to Marty. Equally well taken is his case against John Mack's sweeping assertion about alien medical procedures. However, I stand by my criticism of his article with respect to the Hill case. While I am pleased to have Marty's clarification of his intent, the fact remains that, without this clarification, we can only read what he did say, not what he meant to say.

Karl T. Pflock

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